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READY WHEN CALLED ¹

Brigadier General (MD) Frederic N. Smalkin, JD

With the massive Federal mobilization and overseas deployment of the National Guard in the First and Second World Wars, it became apparent that a back-up military force should stay in the various states to take on the state militia duties that would otherwise not be fulfilled. These State Guards, as they were called, were state troops without Federal reserve status. Many states, including Maryland, had thousands of volunteer State Guardsmen during both wars. These units were generally disbanded after the wars.

The modern version of the State Guard, born during the Cold War, is the State Defense Force (SDF). The Constitution authorizes states to maintain troops only with the consent of Congress, and Congress has consented to maintenance of the National Guard and State Defense Forces. Presently, about half the states have SDFs.

During peacetime, the Cold War, and when there was no local or regional state of emergency, many SDFs lacked a coherent sense of identity and mission. It was unlikely that the National Guard would be subject to federal call-up on the scale of the World Wars, and there seemed to be little use for what amounted to a body of troops redundant to the National Guard.

In Maryland, at the millennium, a handful of key leaders in the Military Department chose to rethink the entire SDF concept, in terms of whether - and, if so, how - the Maryland Defense Force (MDDF) should be restructured. It was concluded that the best and highest use of the MDDF should remain as a "back-up" force for the National Guard, but not just in case of mobilization. That is, why not utilize the Defense Force as a pool of trained, often professionally-qualified, soldiers who could augment the National Guard in those areas where the Guard had a specific need?

Thus, the "new" MDDF was born, with the key concept being the creation of talent pools, organized into professional mission-oriented commands, e.g., legal, medical, and chaplain. Highly qualified commanders - most of them former active or reserve officers - were recruited, and they, in turn, recruited other professionals for their commands. Additional commands were organized, as qualified personnel presented themselves.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina the MDDF expanded its Medical Command (which had already achieved Medical Reserve Corps recognition), and deployed teams to the New Orleans vicinity, where they treated close to 7,000 patients over a period of three weeks (see photograph below). This out-of-state deployment of the MDDF (as authorized by Maryland statute, but never before utilized) was highly successful, leading to the organization of the Medical Command into the 10th (MD) Medical Regiment.

¹ Published herein with permission from the Maryland Military Department, where it appeared in *Maryland Military Department Digest*, Winter 2007, p. 13.



Members of the Maryland Defense Force deployed to Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina. Photo by Division Chief Michael O'Connell, Ann Arundel, Maryland Fire Department.

The question of how best to utilize other non-professionally-qualified soldiers was solved by abolishing the traditional battalions and reorganizing units into a Military Support Command, the purpose of which is to provide command, control, logistic, and administrative support to MDDF personnel in deployment or other operational environments. Another function of military support personnel is to serve, after intensive training, in the Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC), alongside civilian and National Guard personnel in both routine and emergency operations.

The theme of fully integrating MDDF personnel into everyday state missions and operations, which is really at the heart of MDDF's post-Cold War mission, is actively pursued at all

levels of the Maryland Military Department. MDDF chaplain personnel are fully trained alongside their Guard counterparts and can perform the same state duties, as they did in Maryland during the Lebanese Repatriation of 2006. MDDF medical personnel are playing integral roles in the Military Department, teamed with Guard medical personnel, in medical missions, ranging from planning for pandemics to deploying with the Maryland Air National Guard's 175th Medical Group to Bosnia on a one-month humanitarian medical mission in connection with the Department of Defense State Partnership Program. MDDF engineering personnel will be assisting in engineering assessments of existing Guard facilities and the design of new ones. On a monthly - and sometimes even weekly - basis, MDDF attorneys, chaplains, and finance officers are tasked with individual counseling of soldiers and their families in cases where National Guard personnel are not available in adequate numbers. And, finally, the MDDF's own cavalry unit (Troop A) performs color guard and parade duties, fulfilling requests from the civilian community for support from the Maryland Military Department.

In sum, we in the MDDF strongly feel that we have, by good planning and good fortune, hit upon a winning formula, assuring that the Defense Force will become and remain an indispensable resource for the State's Military Department, in accordance with its traditions, but with an eye to the future.